

# DRY NIGHTS WHILE THE MOON SHINES: AMERICAN PROHIBITION

BACKGROUND GUIDE  
BOOTLEGGERS (L) AND THE BUREAU (B)

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# EQUITY DISCLAIMER & CONTENT WARNING

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Throughout this committee, delegates will be engaging in complex debates and discussions covering a wide array of topics. As SSICsim seeks to provide an enriching educational experience that facilitates understanding of the implications of real-world issues, the content of our committees may involve sensitive or controversial subject matter for the purposes of academia and accuracy.

We ask that delegates be respectful, professional, tactful, and diplomatic when engaging with all committee content, representing their assigned country's or character's position in an equitable manner, communicating with staff and other delegates, and responding to opposing viewpoints.

This Background Guide presents topics that may be distressing to some Delegates, including but not limited to:

- Firearms, Organized Crime, and Violence
- Prostitution and Sex Work
- Alcohol/Substance Abuse

Great care will be taken by staff in handling any/all of these topics should they arise. The historical context in which this committee is set has certain political and social views that delegates will not engage with. In order to make this an inclusive community, there will be a zero tolerance policy for racism, sexism, and/or homophobia. We hope that delegates can engage in discussion surrounding this period without taking on the antiquated and offensive viewpoints of the society of the time—it is unnecessary to the content of the committee and we hope to create a fruitful, engaging, and fun environment for all.

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SSICsim recognizes the sensitivity associated with many of our topics, and we encourage you to be aware of and set healthy boundaries that work for you. This may include: refraining from reading certain parts of the background guide, preparing yourself before reading this background guide, doing some self-care or seeking support after reading the background guide, or anything that can help make you feel more comfortable. We ask that all Delegates remain considerate of the boundaries that other Delegates set.

SSICsim expects that all discussions amongst delegates will remain productive and respectful of one another. If you have any equity concerns or need assistance in setting boundaries or navigating sensitive subject matter, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or our Director-General of Equity Affairs, Aidan Thompson, at [equity@ssicsim.ca](mailto:equity@ssicsim.ca). We want you to feel safe and comfortable at SSICsim!

If you wish to switch committees after having read the content warnings for this committee, please:

- Contact your Faculty Advisor/Head Delegate with your request if you are a part of a group delegation
- Email our Director-General of Equity Affairs, Aidan Thompson, with a brief explanation of why you would like to switch committees if you are NOT a part of a group delegation.



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DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF EQUITY AFFAIRS

# LETTER FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS

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Dear Delegates,

We are both pleased to welcome you to Dry Nights While The Moon Shines: American Prohibition. This committee will challenge you to step into the shoes of a figure from one of American history's greatest cat and mouse chases. Whether you will be representing a notorious bureau agent, or a profiteering bootlegger, your decisions will define your path in this committee. Your success, or demise, is completely in your hands.

My name is Pe'er Krut, and I am a third-year student at Western University pursuing an Honours Specialization in International Relations. I am incredibly excited to help facilitate this committee as I genuinely believe that MUN sparked my passion for diplomacy. Previously, I served as the President of my high school MUN for 2 years, and am now entering my 2nd term as Western Model U.N's Head Delegate. Outside Model U.N, I serve as the Communications Director for Young Diplomats of Canada.

My name is Nesta Muthu and I'm excited to help create this committee. I'm a third year student at the University of Toronto studying Political science and the Classics. I've been involved with Model UN since 2018 as a delegate since highschool, and since then I've continued competing alongside being staff for various conferences. Recently, I've been a part of UofT's secondary school level conference UTMUN as a vice director and the university's collegiate level conference NAMUN as a member of the Communications and Design team.

We strongly suggest that you all review this background guide thoroughly, it will really help you gauge the time period and this will be essential to your success in the committee. More

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than this, we encourage you to all do some additional research into your characters, and also consider what will motivate your moves in the committee. We look forward to welcoming delegates that understand their stance, motivations, and desires—it will make our committee that much more interesting!

If there is one piece of advice that we can offer you, it is to make the best of your time in committee and have fun! Cultivate connections with the other delegates and have fun both in committee and outside of it. The friendships you make in Model U.N can follow you throughout high school and beyond, so learn from each other and take the time to get to know your fellow delegates.

Best of luck and please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns!



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NESTA MUTHU (HE/HIM)  
CO-DIRECTOR FOR AMERICAN PROHIBITION



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PE'ER KRUT (SHE/HER)  
CO-DIRECTOR FOR AMERICAN PROHIBITION



# INTRODUCTION

## *For American Prohibition*

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In 1920, the United States Congress passed the Volstead Act, banning the general production and sale of alcohol in America. Many states quickly adopted these new regulations to various degrees of severity; soon, the entire nation had gone dry.

Crime rates have only escalated since the ban, with alcohol's illegal production and sale proving lucrative rackets for many, mostly notably those who produce and transport their own illegal alcohol, bootleggers.

In response, the Department of Justice has put together a Bureau of Prohibition to enforce the ban and crack down on bootleggers and organized crime.

Delegates will have the chance to represent the Bootleggers, who are looking to strike it rich while evading the bureau—being careful who to trust along the way.

On the other side, the Bureau agents will hunt down some of the most illustrious bootleggers of the period, being careful to resist the temptation of the wealthy and wild criminal underworld.

# DEFINITIONS

*For American Prohibition*

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## **Moonshine/ Bathtub Gin**

The informal name given to amateur, illegally made alcohol. Bathtub Gin was often used in the north while Moonshine was used more in the south

## **Volstead act/Prohibition Act**

An act enacted by the U.S Congress that established the prohibition of alcoholic drinks, informally referred to as the Volstead act.

## **Bureau of Prohibition**

A Federal Law enforcement agency formed to enforce the Prohibition Act, primarily the manufacturing, sale and transportation of alcoholic beverages. Initially a part of the Bureau of Internal Revenue known as the Prohibition unit, it would eventually become its own independent unit.

## **Flappers**

A subculture of young women in the 1920s who rebelled against the traditional morality of their Victorian parents by smoking in public, frequenting speakeasies and drinking alcohol, and practicing sexual freedom.

## **Bootlegging/Rum-running**

An informal term for the act of illegally transporting alcohol.



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## Dry Supporter

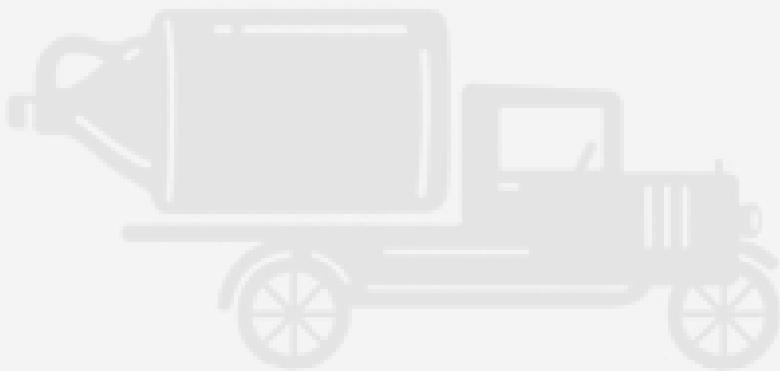
An informal name for people who support prohibition, often part of the temperance movement or the Anti-saloon league

## Wet Supporter

An informal name for people who didn't support prohibition, often apart of the alcohol industry

## Speakeasy

Also know as a blind tiger or a blind pig, Speakeasies are illicit establishments that served and sold alcoholic beverages



# HISTORY/CONTEXT

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The Prohibition era was born from the temperance movements that swept the United States in the 19th century. Temperance movements were social movements that called for moderation and/or abstinence from alcohol due to its association with social ills and the breakdown of moral society.

First, the movement began to achieve their goals on a state-level when some states began to act upon such temperance beliefs by limiting or banning the sale of alcohol. By the mid-19th century, states like Massachusetts and Maine amongst others had banned the sale of alcohol at one point or another, setting an important precedent. Mostly, however, state-level temperance laws were popular in rural southern and western states.

The popularity and organization of the temperance movement was further made apparent by the founding of the Anti-Saloon League in 1893. This powerful non-partisan and national organization focused solely on promoting prohibition. With branches across the U.S, and by allying with other pro-temperance stakeholders like churches and the national Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the League set their site on larger goals.

*The temperance movements that paved the way for Prohibition had a great deal of support from a variety of stakeholders. Women were one such group, and they would often create temperance societies nationwide to advocate for the cause as they believed that alcohol contributed to the breakdown of their families and marriages.*

*Factory owners who were seeing an unprecedented amount of growth in the midst of the industrial revolution were also often pro-temperance, as they believed alcohol could lead to employee injury and therefore, decreased production.*

Given their existing success and popularity, by the early 20th Century, the temperance

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movement was ready to make change on a national level. In 1916, the powerful Anti-Saloon League helped elect the 2/3 majority it required in both houses of Congress to pass a national prohibition bill.

The fervor of the temperance movement finally came to a head in 1917 when after years of lobbying, the United States Congress put forward the 18th Amendment which would create a constitutional ban on the production, sale, and transportation of alcohol. Gaining overwhelming support in Congress, the amendment was ratified in 1919 and would go into effect a year later. By this time, 33 states already had prohibition laws of their own.

To ensure the smooth implementation and enforcement of the new nation-wide ban, Congress created the National Prohibition Act in October of 1919—the legislation was widely referred to as the Volstead Act after its main proponent Andrew Volstead. The road to passing the Act, however, was not easy. Debate surrounding the Act brought to light an important separation that would characterize discussion about prohibition in the years to come—the battle between the “wets” and “bone-dry’s”.

When the Republican Volstead presented a previous version of the act in May of 1919, the anti-prohibition Democrats countered with a call for the repeal of Wartime Prohibition which, at the time, served as a temporary federal law that limited the production of beer and wine to save grain for the production of food during the war. The Republican majority in the house, referred to as the bone-dry’s for their strong support of Prohibition, denied this and would push through the passing of the Volstead Act.

# PRESENT INSTITUTIONS AND ISSUES

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## The Bureau

After the ratification of the 18th amendment in 1920, despite the efforts of the Volstead Act, enforcement of this “noble experiment” proved much harder than anticipated. Initially, the IRS was given the responsibility of enforcing the ban. Subsequently, the IRS created the Prohibition unit—a brand new and ill-funded group that was tasked with overseeing the enforcement of this monumental ban nationwide. Moreover, the quality and character of the newly hired agents was questionable to say the least. Staff in the unit did not need to take Civil Service exams, and members of Congress appointing their cronies was not uncommon. The Prohibition agents soon became infamous for their many escapades, and were often referred to as “Prohi’s”.

To catch the many bootleggers that were violating the Volstead act, and allowing an illicit culture surrounding alcohol to continue, the Prohi’s would engage in regular chase downs to find and arrest violators. Sometimes, their efforts went so far as to launch elaborate undercover missions where they disguised themselves as farmers, truck drivers, and even gravediggers.

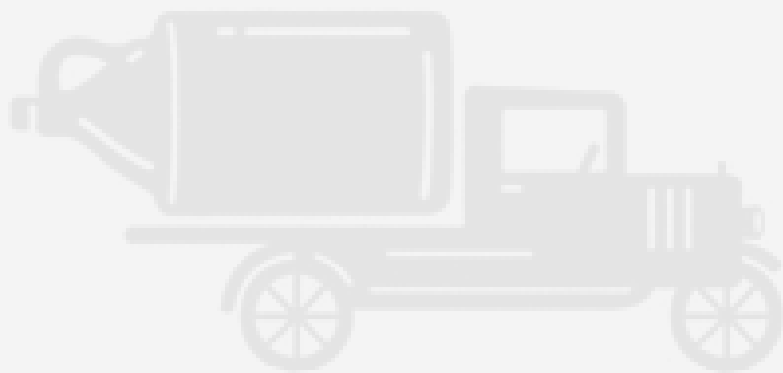
## The Bootleggers

Prohibition created a boom in bootlegging, the illegal production and transport of alcohol. People throughout the United States began running operations to produce their own alcohol from whatever materials and means they had available to them. In addition to domestic production, rum running from across borders became very common. Rum-runners would go toe to toe with the United States coast guard as they smuggled in foreign alcohol on ships, with their cargo having enormous value at times. Cities like New York and

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Chicago were being flooded with foreign goods like Canadian Whisky from the maritimes and British Gin from across the Atlantic, while alcohol from the Bahamas and the Gulf of Mexico found its way across the south, most notably in Texas, Louisiana, and Alabama. This illegally produced and imported alcohol would soon find its way into numerous speakeasies, establishments that sold and served illegal alcohol.

In addition to speakeasies, pharmacies became extremely popular, as they were able to legally sell alcohol as a medical ingredient in remedy and medicine. By the late 1920s, moonshine, bathtub gin, and speakeasies had become household terms, and bootlegging had become ingrained in American culture.



# STATE OF AFFAIRS AND TOPICS OF DEBATE

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The year is 1929, and the IRS has shifted responsibility for the oversight of the noble experiment to the Department of Justice who renamed the Prohibition Unit to the Bureau of Prohibition. Its first order of business, launching a massive campaign to crackdown on the many bootleggers, particularly a series of raids nationwide on suspected bootlegging operations. While these were successful in shutting down several bootlegging outfits and giving the Bureau valuable information, they made very few meaningful arrests and many key players in the world of bootlegging are still at large.

With 26 year old Eliot Ness in charge, the Bureau now has a group of other young, loyal, and unbribable agents committed to cracking down on violators of the Volstead Act all while making a name for themselves. Other agents, however, are not so noble and are very susceptible to bribery from the lucrative bootlegging industry—the largest of which would make up to \$60 million annually from bootlegging, enough money to spend a pretty sum to wade off law enforcement.

At this point, the Bureau has already been carefully tracking bootlegging operations but they had found tricky ways of making the most of loopholes. For example, pharmacists are still able to dispense Whiskey under the act for medical-related reasons. As a result, bootleggers would often run pharmacies and the number of them in certain areas tripled in these years.

There is also some frustration with prohibition amongst the regular people. Initially, supporters pushed the idea that the dry era would lead to an increased sale of household goods, clothing and entertainment. With the closing of saloons, they hoped that rent would increase and that neighborhoods would improve to be more family friendly. Few of these

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benefits came to fruition. Instead, economic effects of Prohibition were mostly negative, and states who previously collected excise taxes for alcohol now lost that large revenue stream.

## Topic A1: Rebuilding

After the heavy losses following the Bureau raids across America, several prominent bootlegging operations have been forced to build their businesses back up again from the ground up. Equipment and raw materials have all been seized or destroyed. The Bureau has logged and flagged certain items that were found during the raids, and bulk purchase and movement of these goods and merchandise may give rise to suspicion and draw the attention of the Bureau. Domestic production has been severely halted, and in the wake of this foreign products from Canada, Mexico and the Bahamas have become extremely popular and profitable, pushing domestically produced alcohol out of the market.

The bootleggers will have to decide whether they want to reestablish a domestic market for illegal alcohol away from the watchful eye of the Bureau, or put away the production business for good and focus solely on the delivery and smuggling of foreign products into the United States.

### Guiding Questions

- Purchasing and moving conventional production equipment may prove to be difficult, should producers consider alternative means to produce and move alcohol?
- Speakeasies and Pharmacies are a gray area the Bureau can impede, how can the Bootleggers make the most of these establishments?
- With foreign goods seemingly smothering the domestic market, is it a worthwhile endeavor to boost domestic production or just stick to running what's popular?

## Topic A2: Crack Down

While the raids conducted throughout the country were successful in shutting down many large scale bootlegging operations, there is still much work to be done. The destruction of bootlegging equipment and the seizure and monitoring of several prominent operation sites

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have been a significant blow to the bootlegging scene, but it has not destroyed it to the point of no return.

Though operations are currently at a halt, many prominent bootleggers evaded criminal charges during the raids and are still at large. So long as these players are still active, the emergence of illegally produced alcohol will be an inevitability, and the Bureau's past efforts will be reversed.

The Bureau's primary goal will be to capture the head bootleggers who are responsible for leading and organizing new operations that have been popping up throughout America. Officers will have to employ various methods in order to uncover the hidden operations of the bootleggers.

The failure to capture these criminals has also sparked some public outrage towards the Bureau. Despite the success of the raids in shutting down operations, many in the public see this as a ruse. Many believe that Bureau officers purposely let the bootleggers escape during their raids, claiming that they are engaging in corruption, taking bribes from the criminal underworld and even taking part in the illegal alcohol business themselves. The Bureau will also have to deal with maintaining their public image, and shaking off the idea that they are in league with the very people they claim to be bringing to justice

### **Guiding Questions**

- Purchasing and moving conventional production equipment may prove to be difficult, should producers consider alternative means to produce and move alcohol?
- Speakeasies and Pharmacies are a gray area the Bureau can impede, how can the Bootleggers make the most of these establishments?
- With foreign goods seemingly smothering the domestic market, is it a worthwhile endeavor to boost domestic production or just stick to running what's popular?

### **Topic B: Rum Running Routes:**

Alongside production, the transport and smuggling of goods is an imperative part of the



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illegal alcohol business. The bootleggers have various smuggling routes connecting major production and shipping hubs such as Detroit, New York, North Carolina, Texas, Louisiana and Florida. Land routes exist connecting all these states, as well as a border route between Mexico and Texas, and several routes connecting domestic hubs as well as important sea routes for smuggling alcohol from the Canadian maritimes and the Bahamas.

Following their raids, the Bureau were able to uncover and map a few land and sea routes using maps left behind by the bootlegger. The Bureau has yet to take any action against these routes, only confirming that the land routes are still in use following the raids. The Bureau is currently unable to confirm the use of the sea routes they have uncovered as they don't have the resources, and the US coast guard is uncooperative in their endeavors.

Meanwhile, the bootleggers have become weary of using their current rum running routes, as they fear the Bureau may have discovered them, though currently they are unsure of whether the Bureau is aware of their activity. Despite the potential danger, they continue to run these routes out of necessity, but they know they will have to look for new routes eventually in order to evade the Bureau.

The bootleggers and the Bureau will be locked into a game of cat and mouse as one room must find new routes and paths to smuggle their alcohol while the other has to chase them down and prevent the transport of these illegal goods. Both rooms will interact with a map of the United States and the relevant surrounding areas with mechanics unique to the committee. The specificity of the map and its mechanics will be discussed further on in the guide.

### Guiding Questions

- Tracking and stopping sea routes are difficult for the Bureau. How can they get the coast guard to offer more assistance?
- The bootleggers are unsure of what intel the Bureau has, is there a way for them to figure this out without sacrificing runs?

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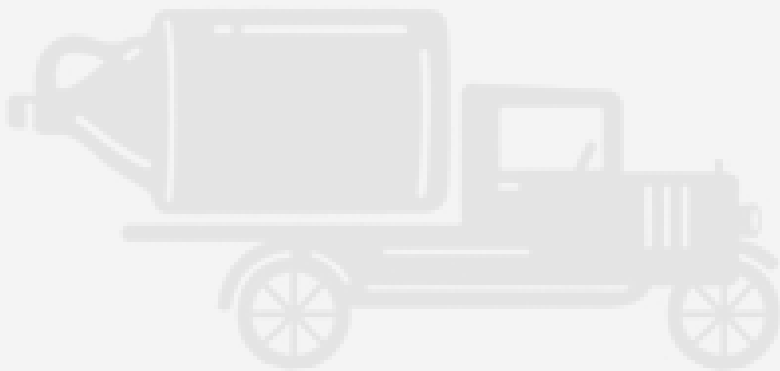
## Topic C: The Moles

The raids conducted by the Bureau have raised some suspicions from both the bootleggers as well as within the Bureau itself. The speed and efficacy in which the Bureau was able to find and takedown several notable operations throughout the United States has led bootleggers to suspect that someone within their own ranks has been working with the other side, leaking sensitive information to the Bureau that allowed them to conduct their raids.

Similarly, the Bureau also believes that there is a mole within their ranks, as despite shutting down many operations they were only able to make a few arrests on minor criminals, the larger players in the bootlegging world seemingly 1 step ahead of their plans. The Bureau believes one of their agents is tipping off the bootleggers just before a raid is conducted, giving them time to escape and evade arrest. The Bureau also has reason to suspect this agent is engaging in bribery with bootleggers, and is a leading contribution to the Bureau's negative public reception.

### Guiding Questions

- The mole seems to be someone who is very well connected. Who in the committee would have the resources and information to make the raids possible?



# FURTHER RESEARCH

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This background guide attempts to provide all the information necessary for debate. That being said, however, it is not a complete coverage of the historical background of Prohibition Era or any of the institutions or people that lived during the era. If you find it necessary, please feel free to go beyond the scope of this background guide and conduct your own research on the topic.

If you are looking for a point to begin your research, the work cited page can provide you with good resources you can use to begin your research. Make sure that any sources you do consult are trustworthy and accurate.

When preparing for this debate, delegates should be knowledgeable about the institutions and political bodies at the time, as well as the attitudes and positions of the historical figures they are representing, in order to make informed decisions during debate that would reflect what their character would do. This committee puts commitment to policy over commitment to history, and so delegates should not limit themselves to the past events during debate and are encouraged to react as their character would in a novel situation.

Once you are familiar with your character assignment and the historical background, make sure that you also understand the flow of the committee. Crisis committees can become very fast paced, so make sure you are familiar with standard crisis mechanics as well as the mechanics that are unique to this committee.

If you have any questions about research, character assignments, crisis mechanics or the committee in general, please feel free to contact us and it would be our pleasure to help you out.

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